

Message Text

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UNCLAS NEW DELHI 12392

USDA FOR GRAIN AND FEED DIVISION FAS.

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR IN
SUBJECT: FOOD IMPORT POLICY

REF: A. NEW DELHI 9018 (6/18/76) B. IN-6065 (8/4/76)

C. IN-6067 (8/5/76)

1. VIRTUALLY ALL INDIAN DAILIES HEADLINED SAMACHAR COVERAGE OF AUGUST 23 ADDRESS TO THE LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE) BY MR. A.P. SHINDE, MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE, UNDER THE GENERAL THEME "GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO STOP FOOD IMPORTS." ESSENCE OF ADDRESS WAS THAT WITH A BUFFER STOCK (INCLUSIVE OF OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS) OF 17 MILLION METRIC TONS THE GOI HAD DECIDED TO STOP FOODGRAIN IMPORTS AS OF JUNE 1976, THAT 1975-76 PRODUCTION OF ALL FOODGRAINS WAS CURRENTLY PLACED AT 118-119 MILLION TONS, THAT 12-13 MILLION TONS OF THE BUFFER WAS HOUSED IN "PUCCA" GODOWNS (COVERED CEMENT WAREHOUSES), AND THAT THE GOI HAD PLANS TO ADD AN ADDITIONAL 5-6 MILLION TONS TO THEIR FOODGRAIN STORAGE CAPACITY.

COMMENT: THE DRAMATIC, SCOOP-LIKE NATURE OF THE SAMACHAR RELEASE OBSCURES THE FACT THAT THE FOODGRAIN SITUATION AND IMPORT POLICY REMAINS ESSENTIALLY AS REPORTED IN REFERENCES ABOVE. THE FOODGRAIN BUFFER OF 17 MILLION TONS UNCLASSIFIED

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IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED 4-6 WEEKS LATER THAN

AS REPORTED BY SAMACHAR AND AGATTACHE'S OFFICE CURRENTLY ESTIMATES 1975-76 (JULY-JUNE) PRODUCTION AT 115 MILLION TONS. IMPORTS OF ALL FOODGRAINS CONTRACTED FOR DELIVERY DURING FY 1976-77 (JULY-JUNE) CURRENTLY AMOUNT TO ABOUT 3.75 MILLION TONS, MOSTLY FROM THE UNITED STATES (1.97 MILLION) AND AUSTRALIA (1.39 MILLION). THE ESSENCE OF REFERENCES TO NO FURTHER FOOD IMPORTS IS SIMPLY A REFLECTION OF THE DECISION NOT TO ENTER ANY NEW CONTRACTS AND NOT A DECISION TO RENEGE ON EXISTING CONTRACTS. A RECONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONAL PURCHASES WILL NOT LIKELY BE FORTHCOMING UNTIL SOMETIME BETWEEN OCTOBER-NOVEMBER WHEN KHARIF PRODUCTION PROSPECTS ARE MORE CERTAIN, AN ASSESSMENT OF RABI PLANTING CONDITIONS HAS BEEN POSSIBLE, AND SOME CLEARER IDEA OF FUTURE WORLD PRICE TRENDS IS AFFORDED BY WINTER PLANTING INTENTIONS IN MAJOR WTEAT PRODUCING COUNTRIES.

THE ADDITIONS OF 5-6 MILLION TONS TO FOODGRAIN STORAGE CAPACITY WAS MADE WITH NO REFERENCE TO ANY TIME FRAME. CURRENT PLANS CALL FOR ROUGHLY 1 MILLION TONS A YEAR OVER THE PERIOD 1976-78, BUT EXACT TARGETS AND A REALISTIC ESTIMATE OF AN OFFICIAL COMMITMENT WILL PROBABLY FOLLOW THE RESULTS OF AN OFFICIALLY COMMISSIONED STUDY DUE FOR RELEASE LATER THIS YEAR.SAXBE

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